



MARTIN WAGNER'S Hepcats

NUMBER 9 APRIL 1998



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ANTARCTIC
STUDIOS



Antarctic Blast

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ANTARCTIC PRESS ATTRACTIONS

(SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

I hope I don't get caught fooling around! by Joeming W. Dunn, MD

I can't believe how much is going on at Antarctic Press and in the comic industry in general this month. I haven't been this excited since...since...I finally won a game of LASER QUEST!

1) James Cameron, director of many fine movies, is FINALLY doing the *SPIDER-MAN* movie. This is what we need to create excitement in the mainstream. Just think, this year's Director of the Year doing a superhero movie. That's like Monet painting a *SUPERMAN* cover.

2) Image and Marvel are merging into one company. This has been in the works since Marvel's bankruptcy announcement. I can't wait to see Todd MacFarlane doing Marvel comics again. It hasn't been the same since the original Image creators left.

3) Alex Robinson's *Box Office Poison* wins three Eisner awards. What is an Eisner award? Well, supposedly, it's like the Academy Awards of comics. If you are one of the readers of *Box Office Poison*, you can see why it deserves an Eisner.

4) Fred Perry leaves Antarctic Press. After many years of being published by Antarctic Press, Fred decides to take a sabbatical. "After drawing over 40 issues of *Gold Digger*, I have received all the praise and accolades that I could possibly imagine. I mean, what I have done has never been duplicated in comics, and so I want to leave on top!" quotes Fred.

5) Our sister company, Radio Comix, grows by leaps and bounds and celebrates an anniversary. "I knew when we spun off a separate company

specifically devoted to anthropomorphics it would be successful," states editor Elin Winkler. "We have gotten a lot of requests to separate from AP, but we like the relationship as it is."

6) Publisher Ben Dunn to draw *MIGHTY TINY* full-time. "This is the series everybody wants to see, so I decided to drop everything and devote all my energy to *Mighty Tiny*," states creator Ben Dunn. "I don't know if we will publish under the AP or Radio Comix banner, but we have time for that decision."

7) Antarctic Toys to produce *HITLER* action figure. "When we placed our survey out on what figure they would like to see, Hitler was the number one choice," states Joeming W. Dunn, Vice President at Antarctic Press. "Our surveys were in all our *Luftwaffe-1946* books, so we felt that it was accurate. In fact, creator of *Luftwaffe* Ted Nomura compiled the survey himself." Choices included were a Smurf, John Quincy Adams, the 5th Emperor of China, Idi Amin or Hitler.

8) The following series are scheduled for release later this year: *ESPolice* by Pat Duke, *Diesel* by Jochen Weltjens, and completion of the original *Shotgun Mary* miniseries by Joe Wight.

9) Antarctic Press announces to attend more conventions. "I've driven to enough conventions to circle the globe twice," states Sales and Promotions manager Matt High. "Why not try to drive the distance to the Moon?"

10) Finally, I hope you don't believe everything you read...and if you do, please write for information on purchasing oil rights here at our office.

HEPCATS WWW PAGE <http://www.mcs.net/~dvoskuil/hepcats/>

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Hepcats Snowblind

CREATED, WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY

MARTIN WAGNER

COVER COLORED BY PAT KELLEY

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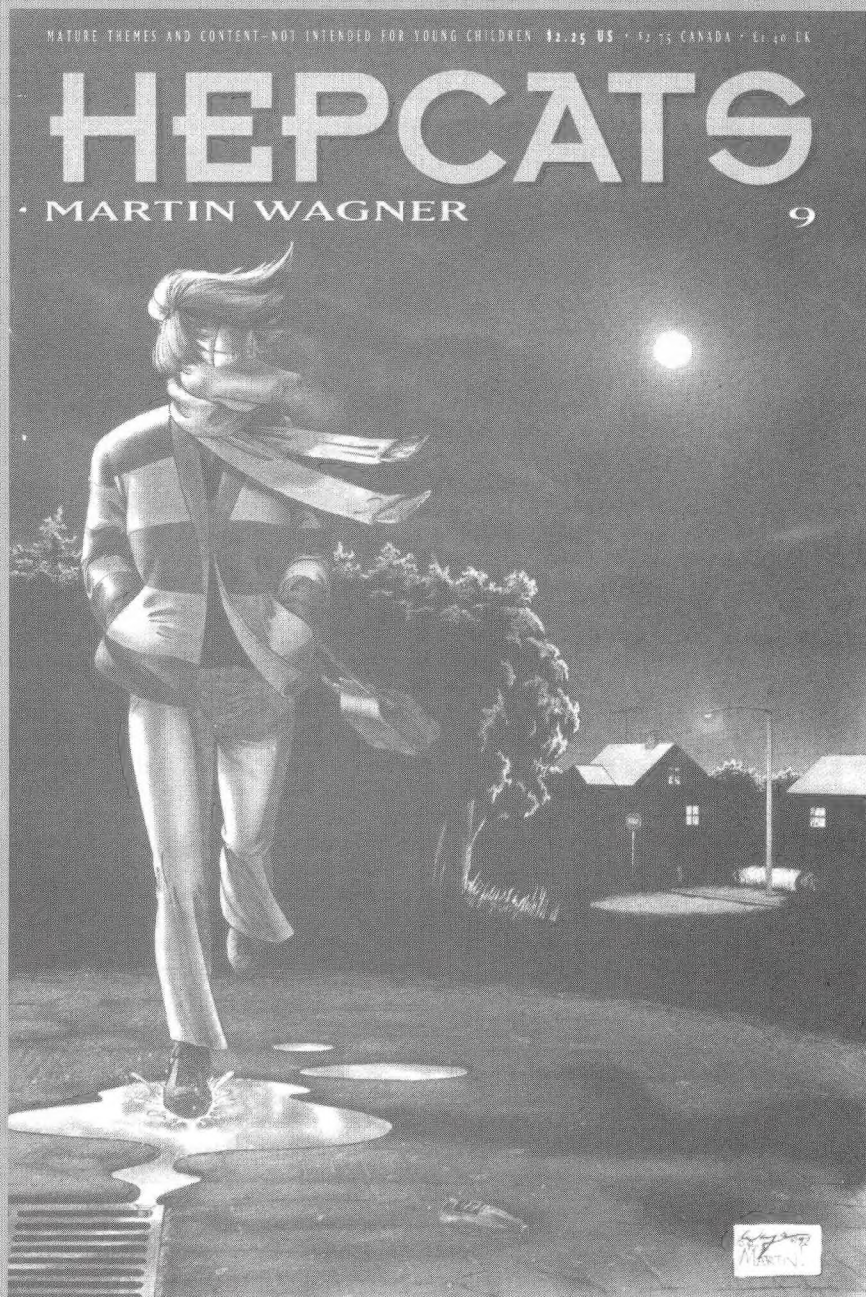
ISSUE NUMBER 9

APRIL 1998

Chapter 7

Kevin &

Kathryn



ANTARCTIC PRESS
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

HEPCATS 9

CREATOR'S COMMENTARY TO 1998 EDITION

(These introductions are provided by Martin Wagner as exclusives to the Antarctic Press reprints of *Hepcats*' first 12 issues. You might want to read the story beforehand, to avoid possible spoilers.)

This was the first issue to hit the streets after my much-publicized association with Dave Sim began, which heralded the beginning of what came to be known as the "self-publishing movement" of the early '90's. Since a lot of people feel that I should have something to say about this subject, I will...not the least of which is that I think it's a shame that so many people have a distorted view of what it was those of us who were into self-publishing at the time were trying to accomplish. Many of these distortions have been perpetuated by people like Gary Groth as well as other snobs in the alternative comix world who seem to consider themselves morally and ethically unassailable. I am happy to have the opportunity to clear the air about many things in this space, and hopefully point out the hypocrisies of our critics as well.

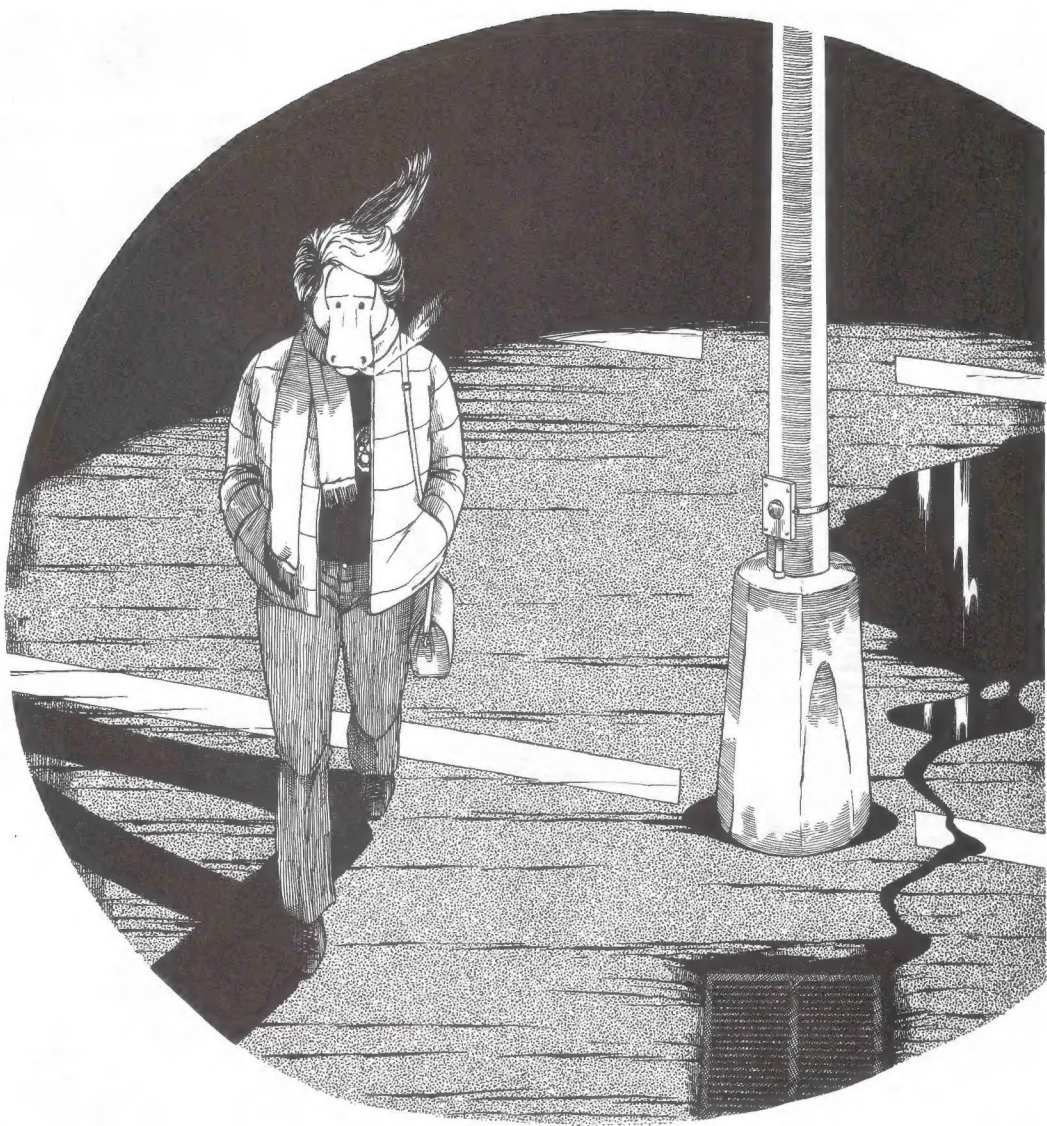
Myth #1: Self-publishers were nothing more than a clique of Dave Sim wannabees. (Corollary: Self-publishers were nothing more than a Friends of Dave Sim Club.) Reality: Yes, we associated with Dave Sim. Like that's a big surprise. At that time, Dave Sim was the most prominent as well as accessible figure who had made self-publishing work successfully, and so it is natural that those of us who sought to publish ourselves would seek the advice of a man of his experience. Since Dave is and was so accessible, not surprisingly these contacts often turned into friendships. Dave's a friendly guy, especially in the hotel bar after the dealer's room has closed. But of course, since Dave has his detractors in the industry, a lot of us drew fire from those people; Gary Groth, in his usual snide tone, wrote derisively in *The Comics Journal* about "following Dave Sim around conventions like a puppy dog." But then again, anyone who cares is well-versed in Groth's long-running feud with Dave and hopefully recognizes this small-minded sniping for what it is. Not all of us, least of all myself, agreed with every point of view Dave espoused. In fact Dave has since had very public fallings-out with both Jeff Smith and Terry Moore; I myself have not spoken to Dave for more than two years, although this is not due in any way to a failed friendship (just haven't had a reason to call, basically). To sum up: sure, we associated with Dave Sim, but the reason we published our own books is because we wanted to publish our own books, not because we wanted to be little Daves. I'm happy being Martin.

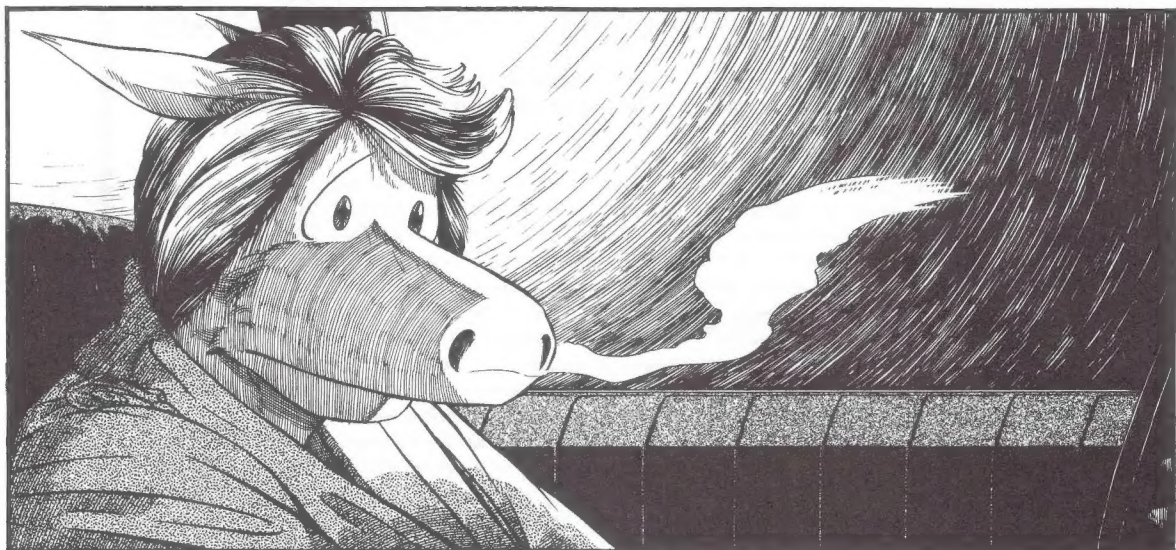
Myth #2: Self-publishers thought they were better/had more integrity than anybody else. Reality: This horseshit has been raked all across the industry, most ironically, by people who have made their entire careers by posturing as pillars of integrity in a wasteland of philistinism. (Why do I keep coming back to Gary here?) I never stopped liking comics by people who didn't self-publish simply because that's what I was doing. While I was self-publishing, my favorite comics to read, besides *Cerebus*, were *Hate*, *Eightball*, *Love & Rockets*, and the Epic editions of *Moebius*. As far as I can tell, this particular distortion might have gotten its start in the fact that we self-publishers were vocal proponents of what we were doing, encouraging artists to give the old do-it-yourself approach a try if they had ever thought of it. As artists are amazingly egocentric people, it's not surprising somewhere along the line this enthusiasm was interpreted as "Look at 'em, thinking they're just the shit because they self-publish. Pompous assholes." Well, all I can say for people who adopt that attitude in life is, grow up. It hasn't a damn thing to do with what we were all about.

Myth #3: The failure of comics like *Hepcats*, *A Distant Soil*, *Tyrant*, *Wandering Star* and others as self-published titles means that self-publishing isn't viable. Reality: First off, these books aren't failures, except maybe *Tyrant*, which seems to have vanished. Most of them are still going with new publishers, which means, if you're one of those rare people (most have been hunted to extinction) in the comics industry who considers *art* rather than just *sales* a standard for success, these books are successful. But each book that failed as a self-published title failed for reasons unique to that book. In my case, it was quite simply that the unprofitable sales figures prevented me from shipping issues on anything approaching a regular basis, which in turn hampered my credibility as a publisher; also, the natural difficulty I have as a person juggling business and artistic responsibilities simultaneously was a major factor. However, that does not mean that it is impossible for some other artist to juggle those elements just fine, and produce a book that has commercial as well as artistic appeal, and get it out regularly. *Bone*, *Strangers in Paradise*, and *Strangehaven* stand today as shining examples of successful self-published books at a time when self-publishing is supposedly "dead." Yes, it is true that this industry is unfriendly to self-publishers, but whether you succeed or fail is up to you and the circumstances you find yourself in, and how you deal with those circumstances.

Myth #4: Self-published comics got better treatment from retailers and distributors than other independently published comics. Reality: HAHAAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! Okay, hang on, let me compose myself. Ahem. Now, what *did* happen was that, yes, we got a lot of publicity and we got on well with the retailers who cared (which was the minority; most shops were Marvel Zombie stores). That was because, as self-publishers, we had a really really personal interest in making our books succeed, and we had a trump card to use in our publicity efforts that most regular publishers don't have: ourselves. As individuals, we could walk up, shake a retailer's hand, say "This is my book, hope you'll check it out," thereby putting a face to the product. Also, since most comic shop owners are self-employed small businessmen, they could relate to our position as struggling business owners and feel an affinity with us, if you will. BUT...

(Whoops, hold that thought till next issue, kids, I'm outta room here...)

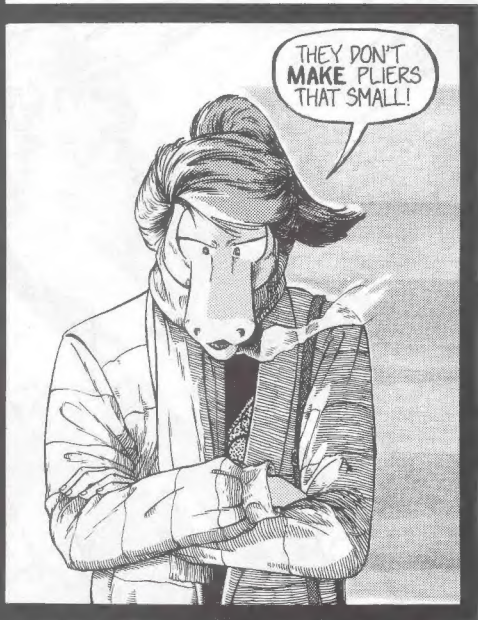
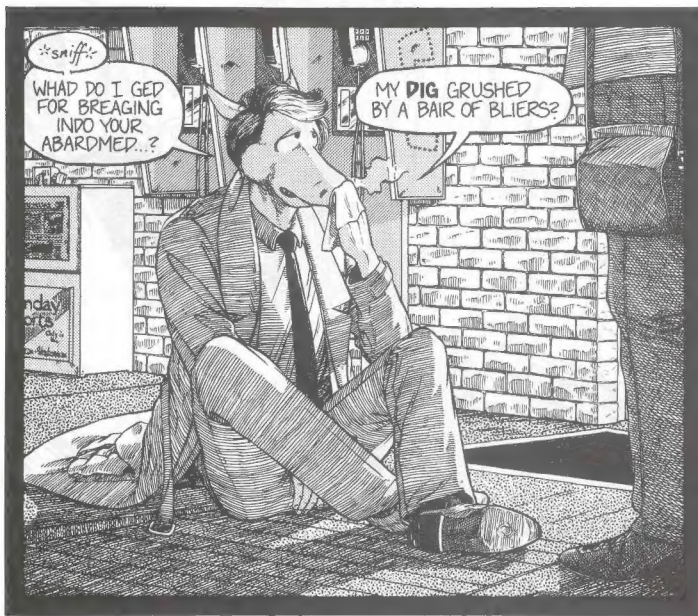

















WELL, GUNTHER! Heh heh—I
GUESS TONIGHT GETS US BOTH NOM-
INATED FOR THE DORKS-OF-THE-YEAR
AWARD!

OH, I
DUNNO,
ARN.

SOMETHING JUST
OCCURRED TO ME...

HM...

IF THIS GUY REALLY
IS AN EX-BOYFRIEND OUT
TO MAKE TROUBLE, I'D
THINK THE **FIRST** THING
SHE'D **DO** IS TELL ME...

WOULDN'T YOU?

ARNIE, OL' BUDDY...

I'M ONLY TOO HAPPY
TO GIVE YOU ALL OF THE
FRIENDLY ADVICE THAT
I CAN...

BUT I CAN'T READ
MINDS, BIG GUY.

YEAH, YEAH.
—Heh

IF I WAS SOME OLD LADY,
I'D SLEEP **REAL** TIGHT KNOW-
ING THERE WERE A COUPLE
OF GOOD CITIZENS LIKE YOU
AND ME OUT ON THE STREETS
KEEPING OUR CITY **SAFE!**
Heh heh heh heh—

WHOA!

**WHAT!
WHAT!**

**THE RING!
I ALMOST
FORGOT!**

**YOU STILL HAVE
ERICA'S RING!**

ARN, IF YOU KEEP
OBSESSING ABOUT THIS
YOU'RE GONNA GIVE
YOURSELF ULCERS.

I—ahem— I GUESS I'LL
JUST GET THAT FROM YOU
WHEN I DROP YOU OFF.

SURE, SURE! I
GUESS I'LL GET TO
SHOW YOU THAT PRO-
GRAM AFTER ALL!

**NO! GUNTHER, FOR
GOD'S SAKE! I JUST
HAVE TO PICK UP THE
RING AND GET HOME!**

**ERICA'S ALL
BY HERSELF AND—**

ARNIE!!

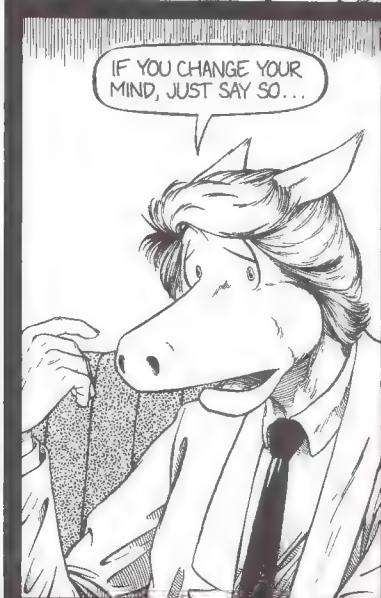
**ERICA'S A
BIG GIRL!**

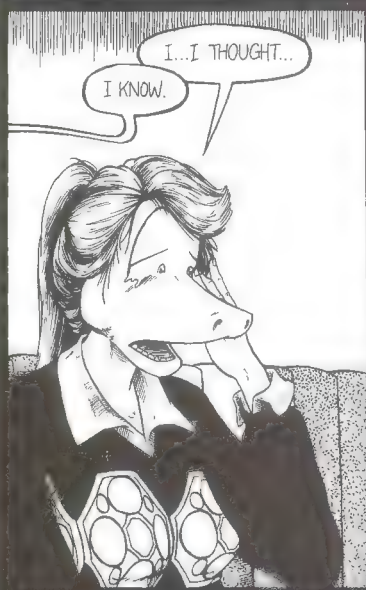
...WELL, I SUPPOSE JUST
THE ONE CUP OF COFFEE
WILL DO FOR RIGHT NOW.

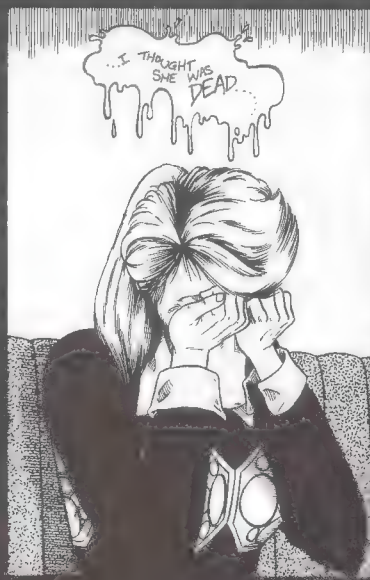
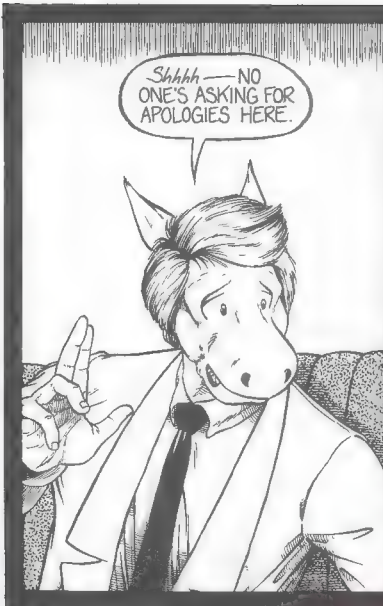
NO CREAM,
PLEASE.

OKAY... I'LL
BRING THAT RIGHT
OUT TO YOU!









WHEN I GOT HOME THAT AFTERNOON, AND I SAW WHAT HAD HAPPENED—SAW DAD—LYING THERE—SAW THE MESS—I WAS SO SHOCKED I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING AT ALL—

AND FOR THE LONGEST TIME I JUST SAT THERE NEXT TO HIM—LIKE, "THIS ISN'T REAL"—BUT OF COURSE THERE IT WAS.

SO I KNEW I HAD TO CALL THE COPS, BUT I WAS A LITTLE NERVOUS, YOU CAN UNDERSTAND.

IT'D BEEN BUSTED ONCE FOR DOPE AND THAT WAS ENOUGH EXPOSURE TO COPS TO LAST ME A LIFETIME! BUT I COULDN'T JUST LEAVE THIS, OBVIOUSLY. WHAT I NEEDED WAS A FEW MINUTES TO GET MY SHIT TOGETHER—

SO I WENT UPSTAIRS—

AND I FOUND ANNEKE IN HER ROOM, IN BED, LIKE SHE WAS HAVING A NAP. AND I THOUGHT, "THIS IS WEIRD... HOW CAN SHE BE TAKING A NAP WITH DAD BLOWING HIS BRAINS OUT DOWNSTAIRS?"

SO I WENT TO WAKE HER UP—

AND I SAW THE BLOOD.

AND, HEH, WELL, THERE I WAS, KA-BOOM! SHOCK NUMBER TWO!

I REMEMBER THINKING, "WHAT IS THIS, SOME MOVIE? HOW CAN MY WHOLE FAMILY BE DEAD? AM I, LIKE, GONNA TURN AROUND AND SEE JASON STANDING THERE?"

BUT WHEN I CHECKED ANNEKE FOR A PULSE, SHE WAS ALIVE! THE PULSE WAS FAINT, BUT IT WAS THERE! I HAULED ASS DOWNSTAIRS TO THE PHONE SO FAST I ALMOST TRIPPED AND BROKE MY STUPID NECK!

THEN I THOUGHT, "HOLY FUCK! WHERE'S KATHRYN!?"

I MEAN, IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T LOVE YOU SIS, BUT MY BRAIN SORT OF FELT LIKE IT HAD BEEN BLOWN UP IN A MICROWAVE, YOU KNOW?

SO AFTER I CALLED 9-1-1 I RAN TO YOUR ROOM, AND IT WAS IMMEDIATELY OBVIOUS, FROM THE WAY ALL YOUR DRAWERS WERE TUMPTED OUT, YOUR STUFF WAS ALL IN A MESS—YOU MUST HAVE BEEN GONE WHEN IT ALL HAPPENED. CAME HOME, TOTALLY FREAKED OUT AND JUST SPLIT. WHO COULD BLAME YOU?

THE COPS CAME. THERE WERE SO MANY FLASHING RED LIGHTS, OUR STREET LOOKED LIKE DISNEY WORLD—

DAD'S DEATH WAS RULED SUICIDE.

ANNEKE WAS SENT TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM.

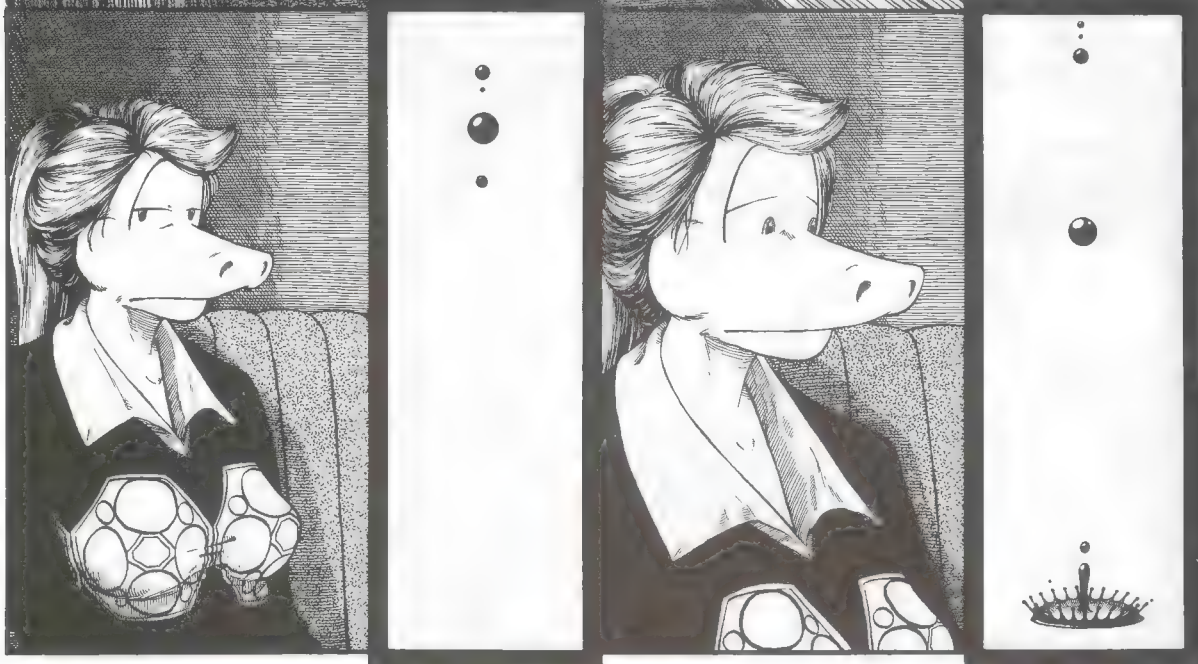
HER VAGINA NEEDED RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY.

THEY GOT WHO-EVER LOOKS FOR RUNAWAYS LOOKING FOR YOU.

UNCLE KARL DROVE DOWN FROM CHARLOTTE.

IT ALL MADE THE EVENING NEWS.

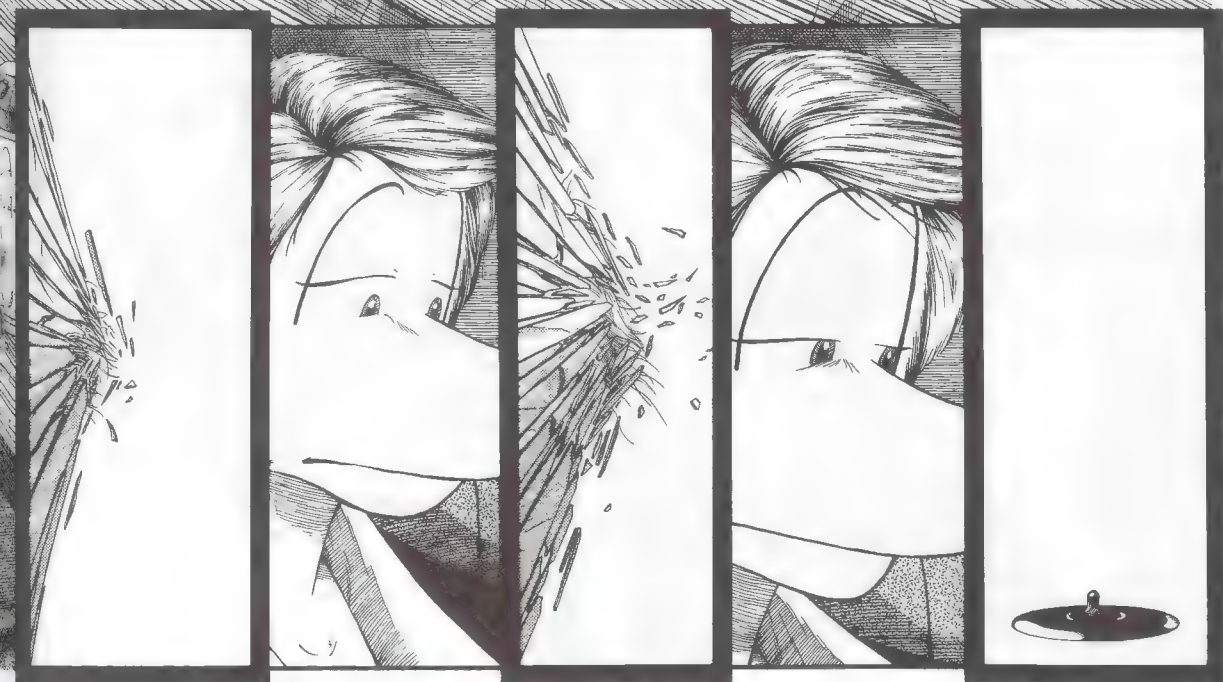
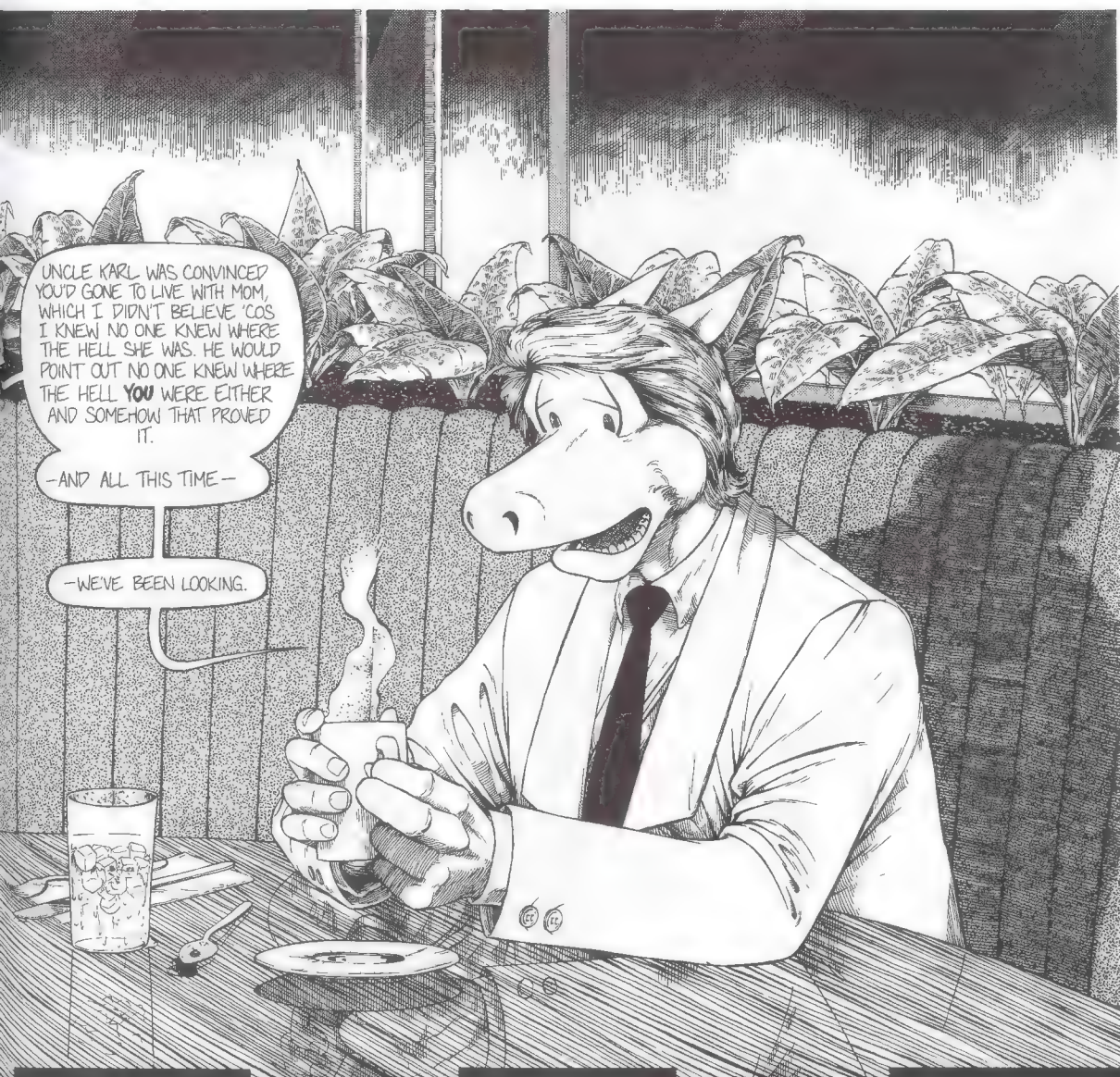
I SPENT THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS STONED.



UNCLE KARL WAS CONVINCED
YOU'D GONE TO LIVE WITH MOM,
WHICH I DIDN'T BELIEVE 'COS
I KNEW NO ONE KNEW WHERE
THE HELL SHE WAS. HE WOULD
POINT OUT NO ONE KNEW WHERE
THE HELL **YOU** WERE EITHER
AND SOMEHOW THAT PROVED
IT.

-AND ALL THIS TIME-

-WE'VE BEEN LOOKING.



YOU KNOW, KATHRYN, I DON'T THINK I EVER HAD A DAY WHEN I LIVED IN THAT OLD HOUSE THAT I DIDN'T THINK OF SOME KIND OF REVENGE. I MEAN, WHO WOULDN'T, RIGHT? WHOEVER MADE UP THIS "HONOR THY FATHER AND MOTHER" NEVER HAD THE **SHIT** BEAT OUT OF 'EM DAY AND NIGHT!

YOU KNOW?

AND I'LL TELL YOU THIS...

I DIDN'T HAVE A SORRY BONE IN MY BODY THEN, AND I SURE AS HELL DON'T **NOW...**

IN FACT, AFTER SEEING ANNEKE, AND READING HIS DAMN **NOTE...**

THE ONLY THING I'M SORRY ABOUT...

IS THE FACT **HE** GOT TO PULL THE TRIGGER.

AND NOT **ME!**

WOW, KEVIN.

THAT'S REALLY MACHO.

I...

I NEVER SAW...

ANY NOTE.

THE NOTE—YOU KNOW—
HIS SUICIDE NOTE! HELL, HE
HAD IT TAPED TO THE FRIDGE!

HE WAS GONNA DO HIMSELF
AND TAKE ALL THREE OF US **WITH**
HIM! SOME KIND OF SICK REVENGE
ON MOM OR SOMETHING! I
MEAN, IS THAT FUCKED UP OR
WHAT?

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SWEET-
WATER'S CRIME OF THE CENTURY!

oh

I MEAN, THE WHOLE THING
WAS BEYOND BELIEF, EVEN FOR
DAD!

YOU REMEMBER THE SLIDING
GLASS DOOR TO THE BACK PATIO,
DON'T YOU? HOW IT WAS BUSTED
IN!?

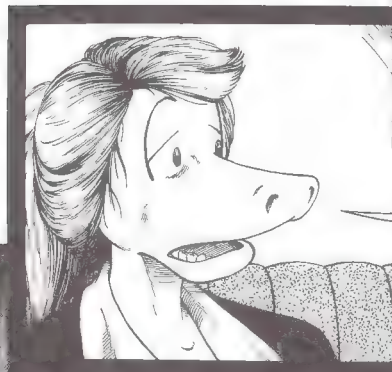
THERE WAS BLOOD ON
THE DEN CARPET.

IT LOOKED LIKE ANNEKE
TRIED TO ESCAPE OUT THE
BACK OR SOMETHING AND HE
THREW HER THROUGH THE
FUCKING WINDOW!

No.

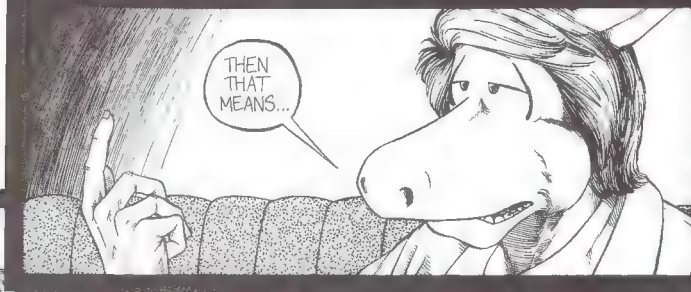
THAT WASN'T ANNEKE.

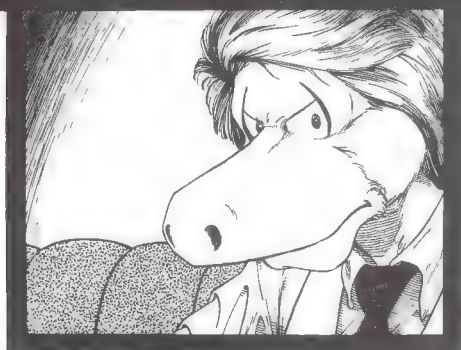
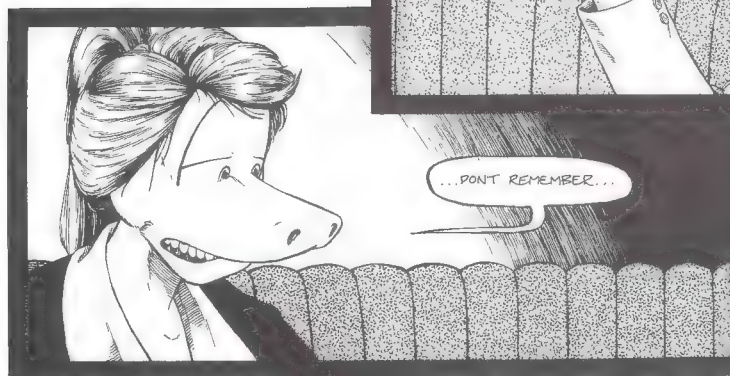
THAT WAS ME



YES.

I REMEMBER
THE PATIO DOOR
VERY WELL.





IS THAT ALL YOU CAN SAY
TO ME — AFTER ALL THIS
TIME?

AFTER YOU RAN **OFF** — NOT
CALLING ANYONE, NOT THINKING
OF ANYONE BUT
YOURSELF?

I HAVE **NO**
IDEA
?

LISTEN —

SIS

WHEN **YOU'VE** LIVED
WITH THE **FALLOUT** FROM
THIS FOR FIVE YEARS —

TAKING CARE OF A
PRE-TEENAGE GIRL WHO'S
GOING **SCHIZO...**

SHUNTING HER IN AND
OUT OF **EVERY HOSPITAL**
IN TWO STATES

LIVING WITH HER
FLASHBACKS

THEN —

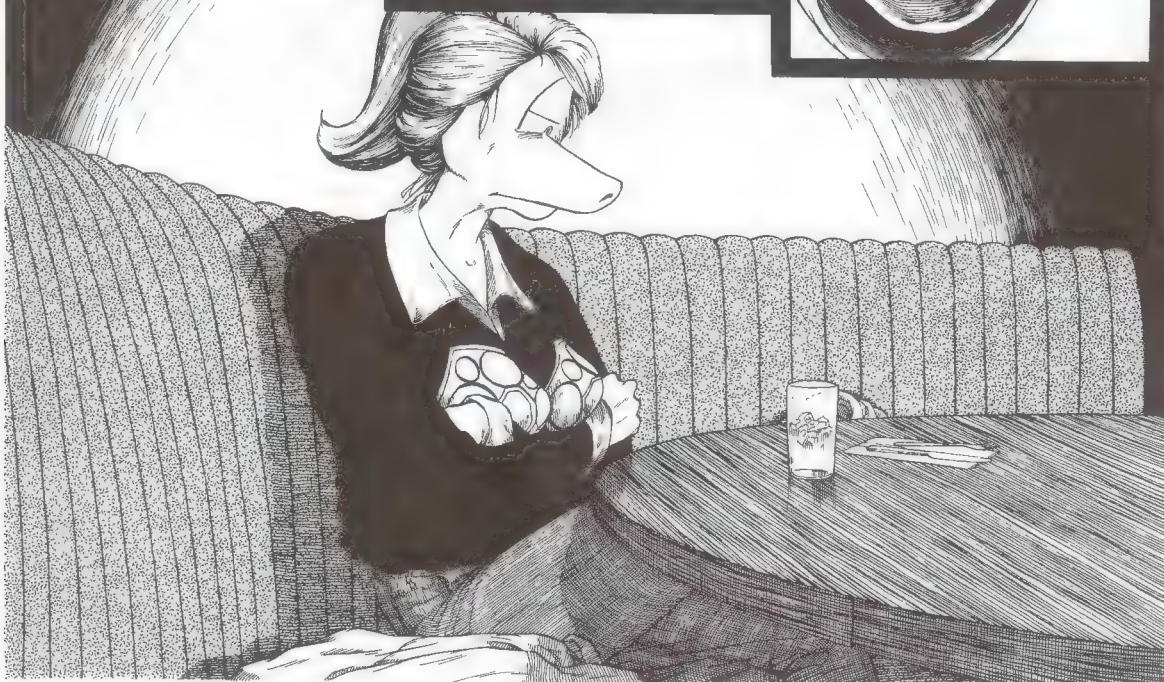
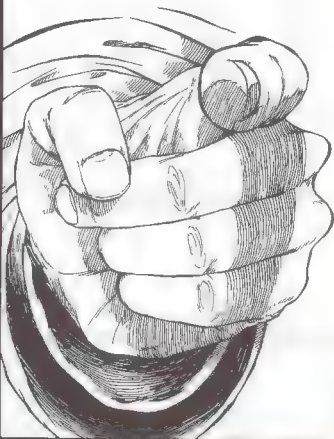
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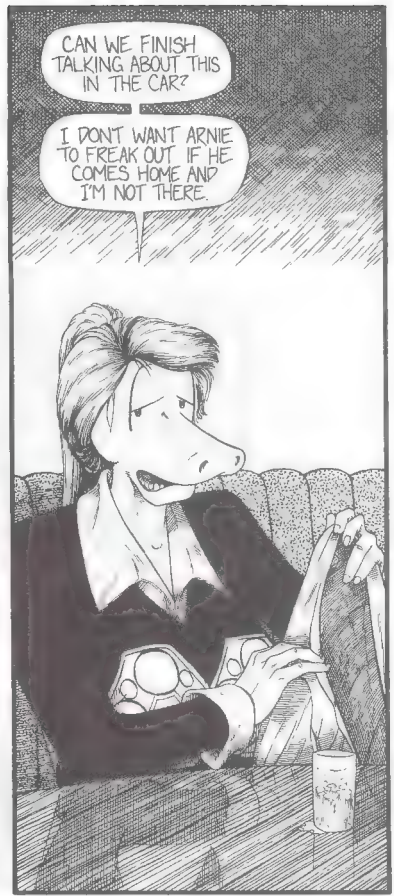
YOU CAN TELL ME —

I
HAVE

NO

IDEA.











ON THE BOARDS



Here are a couple of pages showcasing some preliminary work for new *Hepcats* projects. *Li'l Hepcats* is a concept I have never done as much with as I would like. From the seed of an idea in the daily strip, to a quick two-pager in the back of the original 1991 edition of issue #8, to their first fully-rendered eight-pager in *Usagi Yojimbo* #37, the whole idea of Joey and Gunther as mischievous little boys is something that has all sorts of potential, but that I simply haven't explored. Perhaps it's just that I'm not a kid person. But still, you'd think I'd just mine my own childhood experiences for the requisite hijinks. I guess I've just been lazy.

Well, I've decided to remedy that by giving the little guys their own special comic for year-end release. I've already begun one story, titled "Allowance," and plan to include at least three others. Why? Why not, that's why.

A bit about the drawing above. A lot of times, ideas for stories will come to me simply through a single image that takes root in my head and which I can't seem to shake. So, naturally, I sit down and draw the damn thing. No one usually sees these drawings; in fact they most often just get stacked away and forgotten once I've decided the story is either a go or a bust. The sketch above is one such inspirational burst. One day I just saw the above scene taking place and whipped it out with a stubby little Ticonderoga pencil. The whole time I was working on it, there was that little voice in my head guiding me along and giving me all the correct pointers ("Gunther's wearing Hush Puppies. His mom always puts him in Hush Puppies.") But what's more interesting is that at the time I drew it, I had no idea what had gotten Gunther so agitated and excitable he just had to tell Joey the big news right that minute. Nor did I really know why Joey was looking so dubious about whatever it was he was hearing. Now I do. But I'm not going to tell you.

Yet.

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Dunn, Perry, Wight, Nomura jam book

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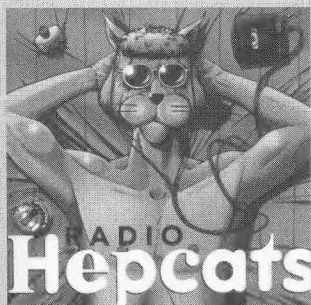
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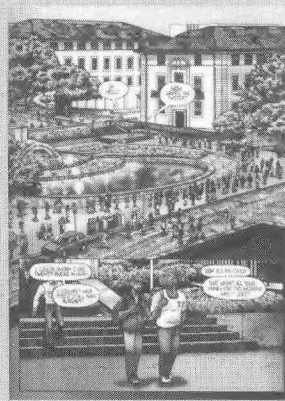
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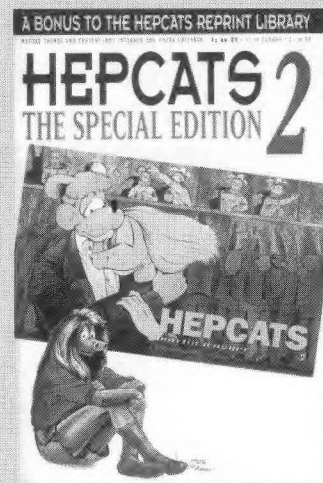
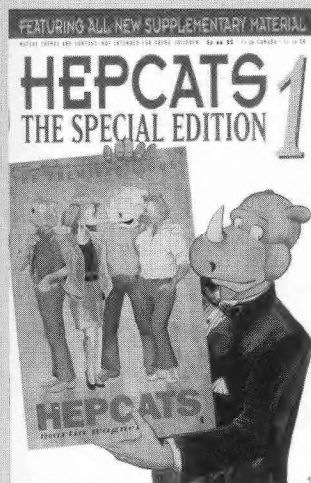
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